

# First Presbyterian Church

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## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

03/02 David Hage  
03/02 Andrew Dempsey  
03/03 Jack Dempsey  
03/07 Char Hawbaker

03/09 Stanley Weber  
03/10 Marvin Speer  
03/10 Jon Dempsey  
03/11 David Coers  
03/15 Mark Dempsey

03/20 Judith Magdich  
03/21 Abbey Schaefer  
03/24 Erik Hopp  
03/28 Julie Batorski  
03/28 Ashley Hawbaker  
03/29 Lucy Beckman  
03/30 DeeAnn Wendt  
03/31 Allen Cumberland

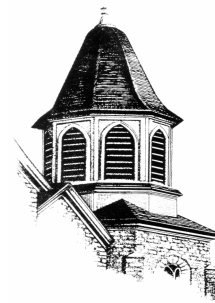
## MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

03/04 Bruce & Carol Bennett  
03/29 Chuck & Vicki Jones

# The Belltower

A Monthly Publication of

**First Presbyterian Church**  
**Dixon, IL 61021**



We're in the middle of Lent, and if you've been with us in worship this winter (Hi to all you snowbirds out there!) you know that I've been preaching on texts from the middle section of the Gospel of Luke, the "Travel Narrative" that takes Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem. (If you're one of those snow birds or have just missed a Sunday or two, please remember that you can find most sermons on our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/dixonfirstpresbyterian](http://www.facebook.com/dixonfirstpresbyterian), anytime.)

There's a part of me that resists the thought of calling the Christian life a "journey" – mostly because it's a very over-used expression. I keep on coming back to it, however, because so much of the Bible is about journeys. Abraham and Sarah left Ur of the Chaldees to travel to a new land, the sons of Jacob traveled down into Egypt, their descendants made an epic forty-year return journey across the wilderness to the Promised Land, and many centuries later their descendants journeyed into exile in Babylon and back again.

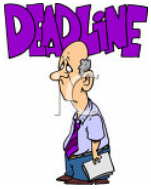
None of these were exactly trips down a modern superhighway. These journeys were long and winding and often painful. God's people wandered off the path because of their moral and spiritual failings. They grumbled and complained. They came up against external forces that slowed them down. But in the process they were formed into a people who learned, and re-learned, to be a community of people in relationship with God—embraced by God's love and called to a distinctive way of life that reflected God's glory. In our human state, it seems like this is the only way we can learn these things.

Jesus' journey in Luke leads those who want to follow him along our own path of being formed and re-formed into a people for God. As we read Luke, we discover that in the "travel narrative" Jesus does a lot more teaching than traveling. It's the learning that matters—the often painful lessons we can only learn by daring to live in relationship with him.

Luke says at the very beginning of Jesus' journey that he "set his face to go to Jerusalem." (Luke 9:51) Although we can learn a lot on this path, the only way to our ultimate destination involves death and resurrection. What God has in mind for us isn't merely wisdom gained by experience, it's transformation—actually becoming like Jesus. But that is only possible because of Jesus' death and resurrection. And it only has its effect in our lives as we die to sin, through the often painful process of being confronted with our failures and turning away from them in repentance to embrace a new way of life. In Luke, Jesus says that we must take up our crosses *daily* (Luke 9:23). Every day is about choosing anew to leave behind the ways that lead to death and embrace the way of Jesus—every day is its own Good Friday and Easter.

As we travel toward Jerusalem, may God grant us the grace to embrace that way. May we always be open to learn new lessons on the road. May we take up our crosses that we might discover anew the power of resurrection!

David



Remember Newsletter information to be turned into the office by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.



Don't forget to **SPRING AHEAD** March 11!!

## **OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT**

As followers of Jesus Christ, we will, by our intentional actions, seek a deeper relationship with God, listen for the Spirit's call to mission in our community, and prayerfully lead others to know the joy of God's love, and to realize God's purpose for life's journey.



The time is fast approaching for graduation. If you have a child, or a grandchild who will be graduating from eighth grade, high school, college, or graduate school, please let the church office know the graduate's name, where they are graduating from, and also send a paragraph telling the church family about their future plans.

### ***What Does the Liturgical Season of Lent Mean?***

We are now in the liturgical season of Lent. The purple pulpit cloth and the four symbols depicted there are meant to remind us of the forty days of Lent and of the important events in the life of Jesus during that time period.

The first symbol represents the ashes of Ash Wednesday (the beginning of Lent). The second, third, and last symbol remind us of events which took place during the last week of Lent, which is Holy Week. Those symbols are: the palm branch of Palm Sunday, the bread and wine of Maundy Thursday's Last Supper, and the crown of thorns of Good Friday. Lent is a season of reflection, prayer, and preparation.

### ***Kenya Corner- Education in Kenya***

In Kenya today, it is compulsory for boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 13 to attend school. Even though the basic education is free, many families cannot afford the expenses for which they are responsible, such as school uniforms, supplies, and transportation.

Upon completion of primary school, students may take tests to qualify for entrance into secondary education. Upon completion of secondary education, they may again take tests to qualify for entrance into a 4-year university, 2-year college, or a trade school.

However, only 60% of students will have the opportunity to even continue to secondary school. Of those students, only a small percentage will be able to attend a 4-year university, 2 year college, or trade school. The failure to continue education is primarily a result of lack of financial resources.

### ***Thank You***

Presidents' Day Camp (PDC) was a great success again. We only had 15 campers but that's not unusual for PDC. The important thing is everyone had a great time, so much so that some campers did not want to leave at the end of the day. I truly want to thank the Christian Education Committee, Lorri Spaulding, Cathy Anderson, Angie Montague, Millie Saathoff, and Amy Badger. I also want to thank those who are not on the Christian Education Committee but just wanted to help: Evelyn Thomas, Toni Vella, Betty Mayfield, and Dani Topping. And finally, I want to thank everyone who gave generous donations of money for the abundance of food we had. No one left hungry. This church and community is truly blessed with the talented people in this church. Thank you for all you do.

Blessings,  
Phil Vella, Christian Education

### ***Lenten Service Schedule Set***

Each year, the Dixon Area Christian Ministerial Association offers an opportunity for Christians from our community to worship together on Sunday evenings. This year's services will include dramatic dialogues based on parables from the Gospel of Matthew. The services begin at 6:00 p.m. This year's locations are: Feb 18 – 1<sup>st</sup> United Methodist, Feb 25 – 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist, March 4 – Grace United Methodist, March 11 – Dixon Church of the Brethren, March 18 – Living Well Church.

## *Update on Lorri*

February has been another one of those mixed months. As the weeks have passed on the targeted therapy medication, Lorri's blood counts have continued to improve, especially the platelet counts, which had been such a big concern earlier. This was also the month for follow-up tests. The CA-125 blood test was in the normal range, indicating that the cancer on the "lower front" (chest, abdomen, etc.) continues to be controlled by the regimen she's on.

Lorri also had a brain MRI on February 20. This is where the "mixed" part comes in. The new scan shows that one of the brain lesions treated with radiation last spring has begun growing again. While that's discouraging, the encouraging side is that it's a single tumor and not too large. Her radiation oncologist in Moline thinks she's a good candidate to be treated with targeted radiation. As I write this we're working on setting up an appointment at the Mayo Clinic. Depending on their advice she will be treated either at Mayo or by the doctor in Moline. By the time this gets to you in the mail we hope that a plan will be made.

Meanwhile, Lorri has been expanding her activities, volunteering as much as possible at the Leydig Center along with participating in all the usual things at church. On the "David" front, it's been good to be back into a somewhat normal routine the past couple of months. I was able to play in the winter concert with the Clinton Symphony Orchestra, and I'm planning to take some continuing education time in March. All of this is possible because we have friends like you who are here with us, praying for us, encouraging us, and doing things that may seem small to you but make a world of difference to us. - David

## *Prayer Guide for March*

Just a little editor's note- For those who don't know -prayer doesn't have to be sitting down. You can pray while you're working around the house, at work, or in the car. Don't forget to listen too. Pray that Jesus would help you remember people or situations to pray for. Don't worry about what to say, thank God that He knows what they or the situation needs. God might say yes, no, or wait. I need reminders too. Let's Praise God! Lorri

Praise Jesus for a great Day Camp! Praise God that spring is coming! Praise God you're alive! Praise God that we have fresh air, and that you have a home or place to stay, friends (even one or two good ones), food, clothes, and people who care about you. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you things to be grateful for and believe, hope, pray and love.

Pray that we might have the mind of Christ. Pray that we might have the love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control of the Holy Spirit! (Galatians 5:22-26) Ask for forgiveness again.

Pray for the many places in the world that are hurting. Pray that God help you find some way to help. Pray for our partners in Kenya- the Presbyterian Churches there are trying to help those in the Central Imenti Presbytery who are suffering from drought.

Pray for people in the mid-west suffering from floods and tornadoes.

Pray for our church and others in Dixon to grow, keep on doing what God wants, and share Christ's message of Life!!